

**Montgomery County Commission on Aging
Public Policy Committee
April meeting minutes**

Commissioners Present: Stephanie Edelstein, John Honig, Nanine Meiklejohn, Jerry Morenoff, Isabelle Schoenfeld, Jack Sprague

Alumni present: Rudy Oswald

Staff Present: Jennifer Long

The meeting began at 9:30 a.m. Stephanie welcomed new (and returning new) members Nanine and Jack.

State advocacy

The General Assembly adjourned on Monday April 10. John and Stephanie reported on the status of bills on which the COA took a position. This year, our support took the form of letters, plus some phone calls and emails. Members of the MC delegation were copied on all letters. The dates of each letter are included.

All the bills supported by the COA were successful. They are:

- HB 147 Establish a Healthy Aging Program in the Maryland Department of Aging. The Commission wrote in support, and requested that the program include oral health. (2/2)
- HB 256/SB 260 Increase the Time for APS to Conduct investigation from 30-60 days. (2/21)
- HB 387 Assisted Living Program Transparency Act, to require assisted living programs to post on their websites, the disclosures that they are required to provide to consumers. The bill was withdrawn by the sponsor, Del. Korman after discussions with DHMH. DHMH will amend the regulations to require this posting. (2/21)
- HB 601/SB 248, to establish a voluntary Senior Call Check Service and Notification Program. (2/21)
- HB 644/SB 180, Independent Living Tax Credit Act, to create a credit against state income taxes for certain home accessibility modifications. (2/17)
- HB 1149/ SB 951 Maryland Securities Act – Vulnerable Adults. Extends the mandatory reporting of suspected abuse or exploitation of vulnerable adults to mortgage lenders. (2/23)
- HB1158, to authorize the Maryland Medical Assistance (Medicaid) program to include adult dental care in its covered services. (3/13).

The Commission also commented on certain proposals in the Governor's budget.

- We supported the proposed transfer of funds from DHMH to MDoA. (2/17)
- We opposed the proposed \$2.5 million reduction in Special Grants Program. (3/6)

There was some discussion of HB 953/SB 696 – LTC Education Task Force. The bill was co-sponsored by Del. Morales and several members of the Montgomery County delegation. We learned towards the end of the session that this bill was inspired by issues raised at the 2015 COA legislative breakfast. It will create a statewide task force, staffed by USM, whose goal is to study and recommend methods to educate Maryland residents about options for paying for long term care. The COA monitored the bill but did not submit written comments.

The PPC also monitored (but did not comment on) a number of other successful bills that would impact older people in the state. They include:

- HB 001 Healthy Working Families Act (passed with a veto-proof majority).
- HB 132 and SB 47 – both were needed to align Maryland law with federal law (Older Americans Act). HB 132 gives the state Long Term Care Ombudsman Program a “seat at the table” in the development of regulations that impact the LTCOP. SB 47 concerns the reporting of abuse of residents of long term care facilities, including requiring that reports be made to the Office of Health Care Quality as well as the LTCOP, and prohibiting the LTCOP from disclosing resident/complainant’s identity (except as permitted by federal law).
- HB 81/SB 556, to remove “confinement” as grounds for a determination of incapacity (and potential guardianship).
- HB 199 raises the limit on certain state capital funding for individual senior centers.
- HB 233/SB 666, to permit the disclosure of a crime victim’s medical records to a guardian-ad-litem (attorney appointed by the court to represent a minor or incapacitated adult’s best interests).
- HB 498/SB 562 bars certain spouses/ex-spouses or others from serving as a health care agent under an advance directive (with primary application in domestic violence situations).

County advocacy

Commission members are in the process of meeting with County Council members to discuss the COA budget and other priorities. Each team is providing a short report on the visit to Noelle.

Noelle testified on the COA’s budget priorities at the Council hearing on April 4, 2017.

Other items of interest: The Council passed Bill 42-16, passed 3/7/17, giving property tax relief to seniors (65+) and veterans who have owned their homes for 40 or more years, if the assessed value of the home is \$650,000 or less.

The Commission submitted comments on proposed regulations to implement the Transportation Services Improvement Fund (Uber and Lyft fund).

Federal advocacy

The Commission wrote to our United States Senators and members of Congress supporting their efforts to oppose the American Health Care Act, and voicing support for the ACA. The letter included a statement by Justice in Aging, explaining the negative impact that the AHCA would have on seniors.

There was discussion about drafting a letter to our congressional delegation supporting an increase in Title III Older Americans Act funding for FY2018. Title III funding is essential to helping seniors to age in their own homes and communities. It covers home and community based supportive services, congregate meals and nutrition programs, and the National Family Caregiver Support program. Rep. Jamie Raskin signed onto a bipartisan letter in support of this increase. The letter is on the n4a website and could be used as a model. Stephanie will be out of town for work until April 26, but offered to draft the letter upon her return.

Other discussion

There was discussion about how the PPC could be more proactive in advocating for the COA’s priorities, particularly at the state and federal levels. There was also discussion of the fact that with a limited number of active members, it’s hard to take on more issues and activities.

Jack suggested writing a letter to Governor Hogan, asking him his position on budget cuts at the federal level that will impact Maryland seniors.

There was also discussion about how the COA identifies priorities.

Health and Wellness and the Aging in Place and Community Planning Committees are developing summer study proposals.

The March 29 stakeholder meeting is in the debriefing stage.

The meeting adjourned at 11 a.m.